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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate  
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee  
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Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of:

House Bill No. 5631, *An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission with Respect to Victim Notification (recommended amendment)*

Crime victims have a State Constitutional right to information about the arrest, conviction, sentence, imprisonment and release of the accused. The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) would like to thank the membership of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission for bringing forward House Bill No. 5631 as the proposal will further advance this right to information for crime victims.

Since the implementation of the earned risk reduction credit program (RREC), pursuant to Public Act No. 11-51, many crime victims have voiced concerns to the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) about the information being provided to them at the time of the sentencing of a defendant. Crime victims are not routinely notified that a defendant may earn a reduction of his/her sentence through the award of RREC, and therefore, are blindsided when notified of the defendant's release date, which is much earlier than expected.

House Bill No. 5631 will provide crime victims with important information regarding the post-conviction opportunities that a defendant has to gain early release from the Department of Correction. The OVA requests an amendment to Section 2 of the proposal to include the originally proposed language (underlined): "if the terms of the plea agreement include a period of incarceration of more than two years or a total effective sentence of more than two years...."

As chair of the subcommittee that worked on this proposal, I assure you that it provides the information crime victims need to make decisions regarding their agreement or opposition to a plea bargain. They want to know whether or not the defendant qualifies for risk reduction, and if so, an estimated length of time. These considerations are essential in making an informed

response when submitting a statement regarding the plea agreement. For a crime victim, any information received is valuable.

In the wake of sweeping criminal justice reforms, it is important that the Constitutional rights of crime victims are not lost in such reforms; that those rights are considered to ensure the fair and just treatment of crime victims throughout the criminal justice process.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony. I strongly urge the Committee's favorable report of House Bill No. 5631, as amended.